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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 SHANGHAI 000360

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [CH](#) [KN](#) [KS](#)

SUBJECT: SHANGHAI SCHOLARS ON NORTH KOREAN POLICY GOALS AND
MOTIVATIONS

REF: A. (A) SHANGHAI 341

[1](#)B. (B) SHANGHAI 359

CLASSIFIED BY: BEATRICE CAMP, CONSUL GENERAL, US CONSULATE
SHANGHAI, DEPARTMENT OF STATE.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Shanghai foreign affairs experts believe North Korea seeks to be recognized as a nuclear weapons state, and Kim Jong-il has moved close to the views of the North Korean military in order to maintain stability during the transfer of power to his successor. The scholars all concluded that North Korea is primarily seeking direct bilateral dialogue with the United States. Further international cooperation and economic pressure against the DPRK could be helpful, the scholars said, but even if China adheres to the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, there are limits to how much pressure China can exert on a border state. North Korean sensitivities and China's commitment to "non-interference" hinder official contingency planning by the Chinese government. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) PolOffs called on a series of Shanghai scholars in late July and early August to discuss Chinese views on the current situation in North Korea. Discussants included: Xia Liping, Dean of the School of Political Science and International Relations at Tongji University; Pan Rui, professor at Fudan University's Center for American Studies; Zhuang Jianzhong, Deputy Executive Director of the Center for National Strategy Studies at Shanghai Jiaotong University; Xue Chen, Research Fellow at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies (SIIS); and Ren Xiao, Associate Dean of Fudan University's Institute of International Studies.

A Nuclear Weapons State?

[1](#)3. (C) Shanghai-based scholars believe it is increasingly evident that North Korea seeks to be recognized as a nuclear

weapons state, and Kim Jong-il is using nuclear weapons and the military for security in order to maintain stability during the transfer of power to his successor. Xia Liping at Tongji University explained that he believes a "great change" has occurred in North Korean nuclear policy since January 2009. Previously, North Korea was willing to trade nuclear weapons for concessions. North Korea is now uninterested in this type of bargain, Xia said, instead seeking to be regarded as a nuclear weapons state. Fudan University's Ren Xiao agreed with Xia, stating that "relations with the outside world" are now secondary considerations to the North Korean leadership; rather, North Korea wishes to present itself as a nuclear weapons state to the domestic population.

Impact of Domestic Politics on International Behavior

14. (C) The scholars agreed that plans for Kim Jong-il's succession have had a significant impact on the DPRK's behavior. Pan Rui and Ren Xiao both said the succession issue means Kim Jong-il is focused on domestic politics. Ren concluded that Kim Jong-il's top priority is regime stability and that he will do everything possible to ensure a smooth transfer of power. Kim has moved closer to the military because the military's support is "absolutely indispensable" to justify that he is correct in choosing one of his sons as a successor, Ren added. Xia Liping suggested Kim also increasingly is looking across the border,

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stating that South Korea's "hard-line policy" was a factor leading to North Korea's provocations earlier in the summer (Ref A). Of course, Kim's health also is an important factor, the scholars said (see also Ref B).

How Many Parties at This Table?

15. (C) Shanghai scholars differed on the future of the Six-Party Talks. Ren Xiao, who has visited North Korea on several occasions, said he "would not exclude the possibility" Kim Jong-il would choose to return to the Six-Party framework. Ren pointed out that North Korea often uses "absolute words" to express its positions, but those strident statements are mostly for domestic consumption. Ren, however, was largely pessimistic that North Korea would return to negotiations in the near-term, if in fact North Korea's strategic objectives are based upon the succession issue. As regime stability is the pressing issue, North Korea would not find it desirable to dismantle their nuclear program and pledge to denuclearize, according to Ren's analysis. Pan Rui stated plainly he believes the "Six-Party Talks are dead" and that North Korea is only interested in bilateral dialogue with the United States.

16. (C) All of the scholars agreed North Korea would prefer direct bilateral dialogue with the United States; however, they said the U.S. position to maintain the Six-Party Talks framework is the correct approach. Xia Liping cautioned that, if bilateral dialogue between the United States and North Korea were to take place, such a dialogue would amount to U.S. recognition of North Korea as a nuclear weapons state. Zhuang Jianzhong specifically stated the U.S. policy not to engage in

bilateral discussions outside the Six-Party Talks is "correct," so as not to fall into North Korea's "trap."

¶17. (C) Xue Chen at SIIS commented China may be considering other forums outside the Six-Party Talks to continue negotiations over the DPRK's nuclear program. He believes China and the United States are "more flexible" on new forums for dialogue, but that South Korea and Japan have the "most to lose" if the Six-Party Talks are disbanded. Pan and Zhuang both reported that China would also reject participation in the proposed dialogue if North Korea were excluded.

Continue to Build International Cooperation

¶18. (C) International cooperation -- with U.S.-China cooperation being most important -- might persuade North Korea to rethink its current strategy, the scholars said. Zhuang believes all the relevant parties should continue to be firm and resolute. International condemnation has forced North Korea to re-think its behavior and approach. Zhuang said the United States and others need not be hasty or impatient to resolve the situation. Right now "the bad boy (North Korea) is crying," Zhuang said, but in time, "it (the DPRK) will calm down" and return to negotiations. Xue added that U.S.-China cooperation on the North Korean issue is "impressive" and should continue.

Economic Pressure Effective but Problematic

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¶19. (C) Economic pressure against the DPRK could be helpful, the scholars said, but even if China adheres to the relevant UN resolutions, there are limits to how much pressure China can exert on a border state. Xia said that in his opinion, China should continue to give food aid while cutting off the DPRK's oil supply. He said that while there would be many "technical difficulties" behind this measure, cutting off oil would severely handicap North Korea's military.

¶10. (C) Ren commented that China has sent "many signals" to North Korea to express dissatisfaction, including the cancellation of high-level visits, the seizure of a shipment of the rare metal vanadium destined for North Korea by Chinese customs, and the termination of a copper-mining deal with a North Korean company being the most recent examples. China has many means at its disposal, and has already used several of them, to give "trouble" to North Korea. However, Ren continued, given that North Korea is a border state, there are limits to the pressure China can apply.

¶11. (C) Xue said China appears to be more actively enforcing UN sanctions. Pan and Zhuang both expect China to adhere to UNSC Resolution 1874. Zhuang said proliferation fears and the risk of too many countries at China's periphery going nuclear would motivate China to uphold UN resolutions.

Prepare for the Post Kim Jong-il Era

¶12. (C) The scholars said they are examining possible changes in North Korea and China's policy towards the DPRK after the death of Kim Jong-il. Xia, an advisor to the Central Government on security issues, promoted the idea of "track-two" dialogue between the United States and China to discuss what the post-Kim Jong-il era might look like in North Korea. Xia said he envisions a "collective leadership" after Kim Jong-il's death in order to maintain social stability. Ren argued, however, that contingency planning at an official level is "unthinkable" because of North Korean sensitivities and Chinese foreign policy principles of "non-interference." Ren personally believes Kim Jong-il still has a few years left "to pave the way" for his successor.

¶13. (C) Xue told PolOff that scholars at SIIS received strict guidance on public discussion of China's North Korea policy. While they have been permitted to criticize North Korea's recent behavior in public forums and publications following the nuclear test in May, Xue said scholars cannot criticize China's policies towards the DPRK. Despite the restrictions, Xue said the academic environment in China on North Korea issues continues to improve.

Comment

¶14. (C) PolOffs met with the scholars during a period of relative calm following the DPRK's provocations earlier in the summer. All of the scholars -- most of whom, we believe, serve

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as policy advisors to the Central Government -- are increasingly focused on the post-Kim Jong-il era. If discussions with the scholars are any indication, however, it appears North Korean sensitivities and China's ideological commitment to "non-interference" are hindering official contingency planning by the Chinese government for Kim's succession.
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